

2
ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 21

NEW YORK TIMES
17 February 1986

U.S. SEES MARCOS LOSING HIGH AIDES

Dissatisfaction Is Said to Rise Among His Supporters

By LESLIE H. GELB

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 16 — Authoritative Administration officials said today that they expected high-level resignations and defections from the Philippine Cabinet and financial institutions and that these would add to the pressures on President Ferdinand E. Marcos to seek accommodations with the democratic opposition.

The officials insisted that the Administration was not promoting desertions from the Marcos camp, but was expecting them based on the knowledge of mounting unhappiness among Marcos supporters. No names were mentioned.

The officials also said Mr. Marcos's acceptance today of Gen. Fabian C. Ver's resignation as Chief of Staff was not enough to quell the dissatisfaction. As they understood the situation, General Ver would still retain his post as head of intelligence and security, and they said Washington wanted the general out of power entirely.

The Administration has long been seeking General Ver's removal and was gearing up for a new effort to that end when, the officials said, Mr. Marcos announced the general's limited resignation. The view in the Administration is that the general was involved in the assassination of Benigno S. Aquino Jr., the husband of Corazon C. Aquino, Mr. Marcos's presidential opponent in the Feb. 7 presidential election.

The Administration believes that when the changes occur in the power structure and as Mr. Marcos is faced with an expected wave of disapproval from the United States Congress, he will have to ask himself whether he is still in a position to govern.

"The question for him will be not only whether he can maintain physical control of the streets," said one senior Administration official who did not want to be identified, "but whether he can retain the services of respected people, carry out necessary reforms and carry on the functions of government."

"Marcos has a hell of a problem with the United States, including with President Reagan," this official continued. "He could hardly misinterpret Reagan's statement yesterday."

On Saturday, Mr. Reagan issued a statement saying the evidence was substantial, if not final, that "the elections were marred by widespread fraud and violence perpetrated largely by the ruling party."

This went well beyond Mr. Reagan's previous remark that "both sides" might have engaged in election misconduct.

Stress on Reagan's Stand

Administration officials said today that the statement was intended not only as a signal of American concern to the Aquino camp, but also as a clear notice to Mr. Marcos of where the President stood. For a year now, Adminis-

tration officials have been trying to convince the Philippine leader that Administration unhappiness with his rule included Mr. Reagan and his top advisers and not just the Administration's Asia experts.

The officials acknowledged that this task was a complicated one in light of their own uncertainty regarding Mr. Reagan's ultimate position on Mr. Marcos, a longtime anti-Communist.

Mr. Reagan's statement Saturday was said to have been a good indication of the direction in which his feelings were moving. But as a senior Administration official said, "We won't know for sure about that and won't get a picture of other differences within the Administration until we face the hard choices."

Primary among these are whether the Administration will go along with an expected Congressional move to cut off or suspend aid to the Philippines, and whether the White House would be prepared to tell Mr. Marcos directly that he must leave office if the situation in the Philippines continues to deteriorate.

Administration officials said Mr. Reagan's statement showed that the consensus was moving in those directions and beyond a simple distancing from the Philippine leader. They said that the State Department had drafted the statement and that it had been approved by the National Security Council's staff and the Pentagon with little difficulty.

Reagan Phoned by Shultz

After that was done and the draft was sent to the President in California, the officials said, Secretary of State

George P. Shultz telephoned Mr. Reagan to lend his personal weight. "Shultz didn't have to make strong representations," an authoritative official said.

Reports in the last week held that Mr. Reagan had been cautioned against taking an anti-Marcos stand by three advisers: Donald T. Regan, the White House Chief of Staff, Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger, and William J. Casey, Director of Central Intelligence.

But according to two officials, these senior advisers did not raise objections either to the statement or to the sending of Philip C. Habib as a special Presidential envoy to the Philippines. The official said that Mr. Habib's mission went beyond a general assessment of the situation, and that the longtime diplomat would seek to tell "the facts of life," as one put it, to Mr. Marcos.

The officials also said Mr. Habib is known to have longstanding questions about Mr. Marcos. In addition, his principal aide for the mission, John Maisto, is a Foreign Service officer with close ties to Aquino supporters.

Resignation of Envoy Cited

As for the expected defections from the Marcos Government, officials noted that a few days ago the Philippine Ambassador to West Germany resigned and that he was a man with influence and connections in his country. They also pointed out that the wives of several Marcos Cabinet officers and sub-Cabinet officials had worked for the National Movement for Free Elections, or Namfrel, the independent citizens' group that monitored the presidential election and that reported widespread vote fraud by the Marcos camp.